
THE
COUNTRY SPECTATOR.

NUMBER VII.

TUESDAY, 20 *November*, 1792.

Λευκὸν ἔαρ, λευκὸν τε θέρος, καὶ χεῖμα φέροισα

Ἦκεῖ καὶ φθινοπώρον.

CALLIM.

How glad the hours, when Spring her fragrance sheds,

And Summer wantons o'er luxuriant meads !

Yet Spring and Summer soon resign their reign

To drear NOVEMBER and his wintry train !

IT has frequently been observed by writers, who have studied mankind, that the love of pleasure, of profit and of fame, are the three great springs of human action. All of these, however, may be considered as different modifications only of the same substance ; the thirst of gain and the desire of reputation being alike reducible to that eager appetite for pleasure, which is natural to Man. Fame stimulates him to the exertion of his powers by the

H

pleasurable sensations, which success once attained has excited in his bosom : and if we enquire into the motive, which actuates the breast of Industry, we shall find, that they, who encounter danger and fatigue in the accumulation of wealth, are animated to perseverance by the prospect of future enjoyment, however remote from the present hour.

YET tho' Pleasure is the great mover of the soul, the cause of its activity, and the destined reward of our toil, she appears to her votaries under different forms, and instructs us to pursue her thro' different paths. To the voluptuary her air is volatile and gay : to him she points out the magnificence of courts and the dazzling ornaments of royalty : and whispers to him, that he who would be happy, must forsake the vale of obscurity for the eminence of ambition and the summit of power. To others her aspect is placid and serene ; these she offers to conduct to happiness thro' the still and unfrequented ways of Philosophy ; and assures them, that they, who seek permanent felicity, must relinquish high and intense delights for the pensive joys which flow from Contemplation.

It is, therefore, of the utmost importance, that we should cherish in our breasts such a desire of pleasure as may be indulged, at least, with safety. Most of the amusements, which solicit our regard, are of such a tendency, that we call those *innocent*,

which are not fraught with certain mischief: and tho' we cannot for a moment hesitate in our choice between the enmity of a declared foe and the indifference of neutrality; yet if we can so far model our natural frame of mind, as to acquire a relish for amusements, which exalt our conceptions and refine the heart, surely the bare possibility of success will justify us in making the experiment. The objects of Nature and the works of the Creation have rarely been contemplated without producing these effects. He, who can prefer a solitary walk in the fields to the noise of a tavern, and can derive greater satisfaction from the operations of his own mind than from the unmeaning conversation of mixed assemblies, must, at least, be allowed to possess a soul, which is open to improvement. "The love of Retirement", says the immortal *Johnson*, "has, in all ages, adhered closely to those minds, which have been most enlarged by knowledge or elevated by genius." Nor is the truth of this remark rendered at all more questionable by the paucity of those, for whom Retirement has charms.

Few know that elegance of soul refin'd,
Whose soft sensation feels a quicker joy
From Melancholy's scenes, than the dull pride
Of tasteless splendour and magnificence
Can e'er afford.

T. WARTON.

The few, however, to whom habit or education has given a relish for serious pastime, cannot feel a vacuity of mind, or dearth of moral amusement, at this season of the year, when Nature discovers the symptoms of decay, and the Creation seems to shrink from the violence, which annually desolates its beauty. There is not, perhaps, a more abundant source of contemplative pleasure, than an autumnal visit to those retreats, which we were accustomed to frequent amidst the luxuriance of summer. The change of forest scenery from gaiety to nakedness, the melody of the groves hushed at the approach of winter, and the fullen aspect, which has already begun to obscure the face of the vegetable world, infuse into the breast a pleasing melancholy and awaken the soul to solemn reflection. Alterations, which rush on the eye all at once after an interval of a few weeks absence, strongly remind us of the lapse of time and of the flight of many moments, which have passed by us unheeded. The tree, which so lately defended us from the heat with its exuberant branches, now rears its defenceless head to the storm; and the devious path, which not long since we pursued with listless steps, is now with difficulty recognised, from the different appearance of the neighbouring objects. Thus we are, in an instant, transported to past scenes; images, which had insensibly vanished from the mind, are brought back in review before it; and as Memory rarely dwells on sensations of pain or disgust, we are

now presented with ideas, which are calculated to inspire pleasure, and which are divested of some uneasiness, with which, it is probable, that they were formerly attended. It is for this reason, that a summer Evening's walk by the side of a river, or a noontide visit to some favorite wood, now recurs to our recollection with charms, which it did not possess, when enjoyed. These are also heightened by the force of comparison. To the ruffled stream we oppose the smooth surface of the brook; and the last lingering remains of foliage are contrasted with the thick and impenetrable screen, which bade defiance to the rays of the sun.

THE agreeable images, therefore, which a walk in the Country at this season of the year, raises in the mind, are now revived rather than originally produced. The terrible graces and the gloomy majesty of *November* must, of themselves, excite emotions of pain and sorrow; nor is the howl of the blast so well adapted to tune the soul to joy, as the concert of the feathered creation: yet the former, however forlorn, are capable of affording us a pensive pleasure, by recalling those happier hours, when Spring gladdened us with its fragrance and Summer invited us to the shade.

BUT the generality of my Readers are, probably, looking forward to the ensuing season, rather than amusing their imaginations with a retrospect of that,

which has lately elapsed. The present month admonishes us to provide for the future, as well as to review the past. While summer is faintly brought back to our remembrance by the small reliques of vegetable beauty still visible, the whistling of the wind against our habitations, and the driving of the rain against our windows, tell us, in forcible language, that Winter and all his icy train are rapidly advancing. The approaching period is seldom, I believe, heartily welcomed, unless by those who reside in the metropolis, and who are enabled by the favour of Fortune to give the reins to luxury and dissipation. Yet I would not have my friends in the Country at all dejected by the prospect before them, or imagine, that he, who properly regulates his habits, may not discover sources of rational entertainment in *Lincolnshire* as well as in *London*, and no less when the Sun is in *Capricorn* than when he is in *Cancer*. The Poets have, in all ages, spoken of the cold months of the year, like men, who knew the comforts of a warm fire-side, and could turn to good account those hours, which the inclemency of the weather prevented them from passing in fields and groves. One of the most ancient *Greek* writers, whose works are yet extant, gives us this lesson :

Παρ δ' ἴθι χαλκείον θάκον καὶ ἐπ' ἀλεα λισχὴν

Ὡρὴ χειμερινή, ὅποτε κρυὸς ἀνέρας εἶργον

Ἰσχανε. ————— HESIOD.

“ In the winter, when the frost keeps thee within doors, go

“to thy arm-chair, and enjoy before a warm fire the comforts of conversation.”

THE gay *Roman* has left us advice to the same effect in a well-known passage :

Dissolve frigus, ligna super foco

Largè reponens. ————— HOR.

Now melt away the winter's cold,

And larger pile the chearful fire. FRANCIS.

and to convince us, that *December* did not depress his spirits or cloud his gaiety, he displays thro' the whole Ode the same joyous and festive humour, as when he hails the *Zephyrs*, or welcomes the return of *May*.

BUT the poets of our own nation seem more expressly to have declared their attachment to the season, which is now commencing.

O Winter, ruler of th' inverted year,

I love thee, all unlovely as thou seem'st,

And dreaded as thou art. ————— COWPER.

I might go on to produce other testimonies in favour of the wintry months, collected from the writings of those, who have been most famed for their wisdom ; but I do not recollect that in the whole course of my reading I ever met with a single sentence in praise of winter, which came from the

pen of a lady, notorious for her love of *whist*, or from that of a gentleman, who was a mere fox-hunter. I ascribe this general silence on *their* part to the heaviness, with which they pass their time; in the same manner as I impute the unanimous suffrage of the Poets to an opposite cause. I shall, therefore conclude my present speculation with exhorting all my Readers, both male and female, to devote the leisure of the ensuing season to such pleasures and amusements as will leave some impression on the memory at a distant period. Thus may four dull months be made to glide cheerfully away, till Spring shall visit us again;—and to those, who can superadd the pleasing recollection of a winter rationally and usefully employed, even Spring shall discover augmented beauty, and shine with unusual lustre.

U.

To Correspondents.

W. G.'s obliging letter is not admissible into this publication for two reasons; it is only a *critique* on the 3d No. of the C. S., by the insertion of which no progress would be made in the work; and it is also so *encomiastic* that it would certainly be attributed—not to W. G.

If JACK FRANKLY intended to be *civil*, he is thanked for his *civility*.